

**Post-conflict Programs: Why do barriers continue to exclude
women from Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration?**

Charles Boutet

7242913

Spring/Summer 2019

Major Research Paper submission under the supervision of Dr. Rita Abrahamsen

University of Ottawa

Graduate School of Public and International Affairs

Abstract

This paper seeks to identify why women, despite the numerous calls for action from United Nations agencies, international policies making direct reference to women and girls in conflict, and the global push for gender equality, continue to face barriers when seeking access to Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) programs? Through an analysis of the different components of DDR program design, in particular, with peace agreements, the paper presents the added value that women can have at all levels (e.g. including women's organizations, female ex-combatants, and mediators) in the development of the terms and conditions of a peace agreement. This paper will substantiate that women's lived experiences, and their comprehension of deep-rooted societal dynamics, offer an inclusive point of view, contributing to greater availability of DDR programs to the most vulnerable beneficiaries. The paper will define DDR strategies as a way to understand the concepts and challenges of conflict resolution. This is followed by an inquiry into the reasons women join armed groups and the participation of women post-conflict, focusing on the roles they play in the development of peace agreements. Women and youth specific policies will be identified and analyzed against areas of co-operation where the international community could better address the challenges of post-conflict programs. The paper concludes by setting out strategic recommendations devised to enhance program design and inclusion. Ultimately, it cautions that the status quo, a lack of women's representation at all levels of decision-making, and program design and implementation, maintains inhibitory language which negatively impacts women's access to post-conflict programs essential to fair, lasting, and gender responsive peace.

Table of Contents

Contents

INTRODUCTION	4
WHAT IS DISARMAMENT, DEMOBILIZATION AND REINTEGRATION?	6
DEFINITIONS AND CHALLENGES	11
DISARMAMENT:	11
DEMOBILIZATION:	12
REINTEGRATION:	14
WHY DO WOMEN JOIN ARMED GROUPS?	15
WOMEN IN CONFLICT AND POST-CONFLICT DISCUSSIONS	18
PEACE AGREEMENTS AND INCLUSION OF WOMEN:	20
BARRIERS WITHIN THE ESTABLISHED TERMINOLOGY	25
CAN WOMEN BE COMBATANTS?	25
WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR DDR?	28
POLICIES INFLUENCING DDR PROGRAM DESIGN	30
POLICIES ON WOMEN:	30
POLICIES ON YOUTH:	34
LEFT OUT OR FORGOTTEN?	36
WHY HAS REINTEGRATION FORGOTTEN WOMEN AND YOUTH?	37
GENDER-SENSITIVE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DDR PROGRAMS	40
ENHANCED REPRESENTATION:	40
PROGRAMMING ASSESSMENTS:	43
TRAINING:	46
CONCLUSION	47
BIBLIOGRAPHY	49

Introduction

For the past several decades of modern peacekeeping, an array of strategies have been applied in an effort to build and maintain peace. The process of Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) is “one of the key limbs in a comprehensive post-conflict reconstruction strategy, which includes the peace process and development of a political solution to conflict, social security reform and transitional justice.”¹ DDR initiatives provide support to combatants to facilitate reintegration to civilian life as a conflict winds down. Enabling beneficiaries to participate in the economy and rebuild fractured social connections outside the confines of conflict is one of DDR’s strongest outcomes. The implementation of DDR programs has been endorsed by the United Nations Security Council; at present, they are being implemented by the United Nations in a number of peacekeeping missions, as well as in conflict situations with no official UN Peacekeeping presence.² While seen as a tool to reintegrate ex-combatants into society, UN officials view DDR as a strategy that has the potential for long-term positive impacts for the societies in which it has been deployed. Although DDR strategies cannot address each component of the peacekeeping process, they play an important role in the overall success of an agreement by reinforcing the cardinal elements of pacification and reconstruction in post-conflict peacebuilding.

Despite accounting for an estimated 50% of the world’s combatants, women’s challenges and roles during and after conflict are largely ignored.³ Women’s issues are rarely recognized in peace agreements, inhibiting their opportunities to be part of DDR programs. When female combatants are not recognized as combatants, or in other words, as individuals who carry and use

¹ Democratic Progress Institute. “DDR and Former Female Combatants”, 2015, pp. 8

² Banholzer, Lilli. “When do disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Programme Succeed?”, *German Development Institute*, Discussion Paper, August 2014, pp. 8

³ MacKenzie, Megan. “Securitization and Desecuritization: Female Soldiers and the Reconstruction of Women in Post-Conflict Sierra Leone”, *Security Studies*, 18:2, 2009, pp. 245

firearms, the entire peace process may be at risk. When peace agreements exclude women from negotiations and the reintegration process, the agreements create new challenges for already vulnerable persons, forfeiting an opportunity to address gender inequalities.⁴

This paper will analyze the exclusion of women from the process of Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration, and suggest that stronger peace can be built when women are included in the decision-making and design of post-conflict programs. After defining the challenges facing DDR program implementation, the paper engages in a gender analysis of the institutionalized definitions of DDR and post-conflict regulatory framework, demonstrating a tendency to exclude women at all levels. Methodologically, this paper looks at evidence of women's involvement in high-level discussions, access to DDR programs based on post-conflict research, policy briefs, field program evaluations, and a diversity of case studies from Africa and around the world. Overall, the paper will look at the definition of each of the components of DDR as a way to understand the concepts and the challenges that they face when being implemented in complex environments. Then, an overview of the reasons women take part in armed groups will offer a common understanding of some of the issues brought forth in the analysis of the lack of women in DDR programs. Perspectives on why women take part in armed groups will be examined and go beyond the misconception that women are always forced or abducted into conflict. This examination will be analyzed against the participation of women post-conflict, particularly on the roles that they play in the development of peace agreements and women and youth specific policies as a way to identify some of the areas where the international community has come to together to identify how they could better address the challenge facing post-conflict programs. The paper concludes on strategic recommendations to enhance programs design and women's inclusion.

⁴ Ollek, Maya Oza. "Forgotten females: Women and girls in post-conflict disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programs", *Department of Political Science*, McGill University, Montreal, August 2007, pp. 39

Ultimately, the paper cautions that the status quo, a lack of women's representation at all levels of decision-making, and program design and implementation, maintains inhibitory language which negatively impacts women's access to post-conflict programs essential to fair, lasting, and gender responsive peace.

What is Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration?

Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) is a peacebuilding strategy implemented as a conflict comes to a point. It seeks to establish safeguards for peace in communities who have been affected by conflict by disarming combatants to prevent new instances of violence, demobilizing combatants to eliminate the organized threat to security, and reintegrating ex-combatants into civilian life. Traditionally implemented after an armed conflict, once a peace agreement had been reached, but increasingly implemented during an ongoing conflict, before a peace agreement is signed. Today, DDR strategies can be found in the majority of peacekeeping operations and are being implemented in a variety of contexts using case by case methods, notably in the Central African Republic, the Republic of Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Niger, Somalia, and Uganda.⁵ As it is used in a peacebuilding context, DDR seeks to establish safeguards for peace in communities who have been affected by conflict. In order to achieve this goal, DDR programs are implemented in three different stages (i.e. Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration are all individual stages), each with their own set of objectives and goals.

⁵ Banholzer, Lilli. "A Macrolevel Perspective on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration of Combatants", *Department of Politics and Management*, University of Konstanz, 2011, pp. 5

The table below serves as a useful guide to demonstrate the support provided by DDR programming across all stages:

The three components of DDR	
Phase	Support
Disarmament	Assembly of soldiers, documentation, and collection and sometimes destruction of weapons
Demobilization	Cantonment of soldiers Supplying basic needs, i.e. food, medication, housing, clothing, basic education and counselling Census Discharge documentation Sometimes first part of reinsertion package Transport to home town
Reinsertion / Reintegration	Job generation and placement Education and training Provision of tool kits, clothing, food and housing materials Distribution of farmland Credit schemes Psychological counselling Direct financial assistance, i.e. cash payments and loans
Table 1: Lilli Banholzer ⁶	

Through these stages, practitioners of DDR aim to ensure ex-combatants are able to successfully reintegrate into society and not return to conflict.⁷ Ensuring transition into civilian life is part of the process of preventing destabilization of the established peace, and the possible re-emergence of an armed conflict involving a multitude of subsequent conflicts.⁸ In fact, the main goal and outcome of DDR programs the integration of ex-combatants into society, as they are the main

⁶ Idem, pp.15

⁷ Muggah, Robert. "No Magic Bullet: A Critical Perspective on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) and Weapons Reduction in Post-Conflict Contexts", *The Round Table*, vol. 94, no. 379, April 2005, pp. 242

⁸ Ibid

sources of destabilization.⁹ For ex-combatants, reintegration into society can be difficult due to frustrations concerning the lack of opportunities and support made available for them when returning to civilian life. This frustration can generate from general dissatisfaction with the terms and conditions of the peace agreements, which can be seen as incentives to return to violence and become spoilers.¹⁰ When DDR is properly implemented, however, it has been demonstrated that there are lower chances of ex-combatants returning to conflict. The table below demonstrates that when DDR is implemented, there is no reversion to conflict 60% of the time.¹¹ This represents a 20% improvement over the 40% success rate without the implementation of DDR strategies.¹²

DDR and lasting peace			
	Without DDR	With DDR	Total
No reversion to conflict	75 (40%)	24 (60%)	99
Reversion to conflict	117 (61%)	16 (39%)	133
Total	192	40	232
Table 2: Lilli Banholzer ¹³			

Developed in the late 1980s, DDR has consistently evolved from lessons learned and best practices being taken into account. Over the course of its development, changes within DDR strategies have classified three distinctive “generations”, each reflecting the nature of conflict at

⁹ Democratic Progress Institute. “DDR and Former Female Combatants”, 2015, pp. 11

¹⁰ According to the research on spoilers, it has been identified that “spoilers are, “leaders and parties who believe that peace emerging from negotiations threatens their power, worldview and interests, and use violence to undermine attempts at achieving it” (Stedman 1997, p. 5). If not properly engaged, spoilers can destroy negotiated settlements, plunging countries back into civil war. Spoilers come in many shapes and sizes; differences in their motivations and goals dictate the types of strategies international actors might employ to bring them to the table.” Humphreys, Macartan, Weinstein, Jeremy M. “Disentangling the Determinants of Successful Demobilization and Reintegration”, Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Washington, DC, 2005, pp. 6

¹¹ Banholzer, Lilli. “A Macrolevel Perspective on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration of Combatants”, *Department of Politics and Management*, University of Konstanz, 2011, pp. 16

¹² Ibid

¹³ Ibid

the time. The first generation of DDR held the promotion of security and stability as its primary objectives, particularly in Latin America and in Southern Africa, two regions of the world that were engaged in civil war.¹⁴ Programming also focused on decommissioning the senior ranks of the military in order to break the chains of command. Once severed, ex-combatants were given compensation and expected to return home.¹⁵ In these early stages of DDR programming, no additional supports were subsequently offered. Neither employment training nor psychological supports were deployed to facilitate the transition from combatant to civilian life. Comparatively, the second generation of DDR is marked by the identification of such support as essential to not only reduce military expenditures but also create the conditions for long-term peace within a country.¹⁶ Moving away from a narrow scope of objectives, the second generation of DDR concentrated on the need for reconciliation between affected communities and the combatants.¹⁷ Though this approach proved to be more effective, the UN realized that programming needed to be more effective in reducing armed conflict and providing economic opportunities.¹⁸

A notable change, however, was the establishment of definitions which were created in the hopes of improving future programs by using set definitions. Although DDR had been part of peacekeeping operations since the 1980s, it is only in the year 2000 that the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) released its official definitions in a document entitled “Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration of Former Combatants in a

¹⁴ Muggah, Robert. “Next Generation Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration”, *World Politics Review*, June 2014, <https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/13862/next-generation-disarmament-demobilization-and-reintegration>

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ Muggah, Robert., O’Donnel, Chris. “Next Generation Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration”, *International Journal of Security and Development*, 4(1): 30, 2015, pp. 3, <https://www.stabilityjournal.org/articles/10.5334/sta.fs/>

¹⁸ Muggah, Robert. “Next Generation Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration”, *World Politics Review*, June 2014, <https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/13862/next-generation-disarmament-demobilization-and-reintegration>

Peacekeeping Environment: Principles and Guidelines.”¹⁹ Although the document recognized the importance of integrating vulnerable groups, such as women and youth, during the design and implementation stages, the fact remains that these groups were, and continue to be, left out of many DDR programs across the world.

The third generation of DDR programming, therefore, sought to integrate multiple changes, such as the implementation of DDR programs during a conflict, which was previously only carried out once a peace agreement had been reached.²⁰ While example of DDR programs being implemented during a conflict can also be found in the second generation of DDR, there is little evidence demonstrating that DDR programs will be successful independent of a peace agreement. In fact, approximately 65% of all DDR programs are implemented when hostilities have declined as this will increase the chances of program success.²¹ This third generation has therefore taken into account the political situation of the country and values DDR as a peace stabilizer and not a stand-alone mechanism. This is an important change, as the local conditions will influence the success of not only the DDR program, but the feasibility of the peace.²² Similar to other programs affecting national development, political support is needed for DDR as it will have a direct impact on the local conditions. By reconceiving activities and the timing of their implementations, DDR programming can positively influence the ongoing peace negotiations and ensure that the peace agreement includes provision for the long-term impacts of DDR.²³

¹⁹ Ollek, Maya Oza. “Forgotten females: Women and girls in post-conflict disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programs”, *Department of Political Science*, McGill University, Montreal, August 2007, pp.24

²⁰ Muggah, Robert., O’Donnel, Chris. “Next Generation Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration”, *International Journal of Security and Development*, 4(1): 30, 2015, pp. 5, <https://www.stabilityjournal.org/articles/10.5334/sta.fs/>

²¹ Banholzer, Lilli. “When do disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Programme Succeed?”, *German Development Institute*, Discussion Paper, August 2014, pp. 22

²² Muggah, Robert., O’Donnel, Chris. “Next Generation Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration”, *International Journal of Security and Development*, 4(1): 30, 2015, pp. 5-6, <https://www.stabilityjournal.org/articles/10.5334/sta.fs/>

²³ Idem, pp. 5

In order to properly understand the different aspects of DDR programs, it is important to define the characteristics and goals of each stage, as well as the challenges surrounding their implementation. The next section will look at each stage of DDR program and provide a working definition as well as present some of the challenges facing the particular stages.

Definitions and Challenges

Disarmament:

As a foundational aspect of DDR, “disarmament refers to the collection, documentation, control, and disposal of small arms, ammunition, explosives, and light and heavy weapons of combatants and, often, of groups within the civilian population in a conflict zone.”²⁴ Andy Knight has also highlighted the importance of UN peacekeepers’ involvement in the disarmament stage is important, as they generally have the capacities to ensure the collection and storage of weapons is done effectively to ensure a safe environment.²⁵ The short-term aim of the disarmament stage is to reduce the number of weapons owned by ex-combatants to enhance security.²⁶ In the long-term, disarmament seeks to prevent further circulation of the weapons on the black market by destroying them.²⁷ This is an important aspect of disarmament as it has been observed that when arms are not taken under UN recommendation, small arms can be used to restart conflict. An unfortunate example occurred in Sierra Leone in the year 2000, when the immediate destruction of weapons was not undertaken.²⁸ In a complex operating environment, disarmament can be challenging as

²⁴ Knight, Andy. “Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration and Post-Conflict Peacebuilding in Africa: An Overview”, *African Security*, 1:1, 2008, pp. 28

²⁵ Ibid

²⁶ Banholzer, Lilli. “When do disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Programme Succeed?”, *German Development Institute*, Discussion Paper, August 2014, pp. 10

²⁷ Ibid

²⁸ Social Development Department. “Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration”, *Conflict, Crime and Violence*, no.119, February 2009, pp. 3

practitioners may feel the need to implement this stage in a fast manner.²⁹ Challenges that can arise from this fast programming is the lack of attention towards women may not be immediately notice. Given that agencies are working under the pressure of the UN to collect and destroy a vast number of small arms, gender consideration, or the outreach to include women at this stage, may not be at the forefront of the response.

It is important to note, however, that the DDR approach is a highly political process which requires support from the State. State support, and its capacity, is particularly needed in the peace process as it will ensure that disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration is followed by opportunities for societal integration.³⁰ Without such integration across all stages, alienation and social fractures persist, and there is little hope that through disarmament alone, ex-combatants will not be motivated to return to armed groups. Throughout the disarmament process, combatants need to be reassured of their future prospects and opportunities to suppress the pull factors offered by conflict, as well as providing motivation to continue into demobilization and reintegration.

Demobilization:

Demobilization requires a culture shift for those reintegrating civilian life. Relying on the DPKO definition, “demobilization is a multifaceted process that officially certifies an individual’s change of status from being a member of a military grouping of some kind to being a civilian.”³¹ This stage is particularly difficult for combatants as they are asked to leave their armed group and livelihoods behind. For many, leaving requires a psychological change which can take time to get

²⁹ Ollek, Maya Oza. “Forgotten females: Women and girls in post-conflict disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programs”, *Department of Political Science*, McGill University, Montreal, August 2007, pp. 53

³⁰ Banholzer, Lilli. “When do disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Programme Succeed?”, *German Development Institute*, Discussion Paper, August 2014, pp. 19

³¹ United Nations. “Operational Guide to the Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards”, 2014, pp. 1-317 <http://unddr.org/uploads/documents/Operational%20Guide.pdf>

used to.³² Ex-combatants are often placed into cantonment sites during this stage as they wait to be reintroduced to their families or brought back to their communities. These cantonment sites are often used as an assembly area to distribute information and support packages as they transition towards the reinsertion stage.³³ This stage represents a step forward for many ex-combatants as it provides them with the necessary information needed before returning to civilian life.³⁴

Demobilization is not the last step in the DDR process, however, it involves a significant reintegration and reorientation process for ex-combatants. During this orientation process, they are given information on certain challenges they will face when being reintegrated into society, such as difficulties to secure livelihoods on their own, as well as community resentment. From previous experience, notably in Rwanda, ex-combatants' comprehension of the information provided during orientation is crucial in order to avoid unrealistic expectations once they return to their communities.³⁵ During this stage, ex-combatants are also being screened for eligibility for the reintegration stage based on the criteria established in the peace agreement and DDR program design. In cases where they are not deemed eligible for the remainder of the DDR process, individuals are screened out of the process and do not receive any of the subsequent benefits offered during this or subsequent reintegration stage. Often, due to the ambiguity of the criteria for eligibility, the most vulnerable to exclusion of DDR programs will be women and youth, whose status as combatants may go unrecognized.

³² Ibid

³³ Banholzer, Lilli. "When do disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Programme Succeed?", *German Development Institute*, Discussion Paper, August 2014, pp. 13

³⁴ Ibid

³⁵ Social Development Department. "Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration", *Conflict, Crime and Violence*, no.119, February 2009, pp.4

Reintegration:

The final stage in DDR is the process of reintegration. Reintegration is seen as the most time-consuming stage of the DDR strategy as it involves a multitude of actors and an open time frame in order to be properly executed. Through this stage, ex-combatants undergo a social and economic reintegration whereby activities are designed to help them gain meaningful employment through catch-up education, training, and access information on the opportunities available for them.³⁶ The economic and social reintegration process remains one of the main aspects of this stage since studies have shown that when ex-combatants are unable to properly reintegrate into society, they are at higher risk of re-recruitment.³⁷ In addition to the training they receive, the reintegration stage is often accompanied by the provision of cash as part of a start-up kit in order to alleviate the hardship of losing their main livelihood. In some cases, cash distribution is done on a monthly basis as opposed to a lump sum to ensure that the money is not spent all at once, and as a way to provide a safety net.³⁸

Despite the number of considerations and the time needed to successfully complete reintegration activities, many challenges arise. Reintegration faces many difficulties as it is not considered a “sexy” aspect of the DDR strategy since the result are not always concretely seen or immediate. While it is recognized that this is an important aspect of the DDR strategy, many implementing agencies place a higher emphasis on the collection and destruction of firearms, as these are quick and visible interventions.³⁹ By having visible interventions, the country and the

³⁶ Knight, Andy. “Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration and Post-Conflict Peacebuilding in Africa: An Overview”, *African Security*, 1:1, 2008, pp. 28

³⁷ Banholzer, Lilli. “When do disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Programme Succeed?”, *German Development Institute*, Discussion Paper, August 2014, pp. 3

³⁸ Alden, Chris. “Making Old Soldiers Fade Away: Lessons from the reintegration of demobilized Soldiers in Mozambique”, *Department of International Relations*, London School of Economics, Vol. 33(3), 2002, pp. 344

³⁹ Muggah, Robert. “No Magic Bullet: A Critical Perspective on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) and Weapons Reduction in Post-Conflict Contexts”, *The Round Table*, vol. 94, no. 379, April 2005, pp. 247

DDR process is seen as successful as they are able to quantify the reach of the program in more concrete ways. While visible activities are important to build the momentum of DDR, longer-term reintegration is essential to the maintenance of peace.

This has been demonstrated in many case studies where ex-combatants have been able to reintegrate into society and leave their ex-armed groups behind them. Sierra Leone is often used as an example of successful DDR programming where “more than 70,000 fighters (89% of the estimated total pool of ex-combatants) were demobilized by the international community and peace has been maintained [...] since the war came to an end.”⁴⁰ The model of Sierra Leone continues to be applied in DDR programming to this day. However, while DDR can be successful, it is not a perfect model. Even in case studies where it has been successfully implemented, by maintaining status quo, DDR fail women and girls who need post-conflict support. The failure of the international community to recognize these vulnerable groups has created an environment where women and girls are left to self-reintegrate civilian life, without the support of DDR programming.

Why Do Women Join Armed Groups?

In order to understand what limits women from benefiting from DDR programs, it is necessary to understand how they came to be affiliated with armed groups as a way to debunk the misconception around their involvement. According to the literature on women in armed conflicts suggests that women join armed groups for similar reasons as men, often seeking self-government

⁴⁰ Humphreys, Macartan, Weinstein, Jeremy M. “Disentangling the Determinants of Successful Demobilization and Reintegration”, Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Washington, DC, 2005, pp. 3

and autonomy.⁴¹ In many cases, women will actively join armed groups as a way to escape the realities they face in their communities, including situations of oppression, sexual assault, lack of economic opportunities, as well as upheld traditional gender roles keeping women away from opportunities outside of the home.⁴² For many women, joining armed groups provided them with opportunities inaccessible to them in their civilian life, such as political involvement, education, training, and economic power.⁴³ While in theory women's participation in armed groups could change their opportunities within society, it is hard to evaluate to what extent their involvement could break up the patriarchal systems that are in place in many conflict-affected countries. Further, their involvement could also have the opposite effect by reinforcing their roles as wives and camp followers. As women and girls are often not seen as "real" soldiers, meaning men who carry and use firearms, their participation could be seen through the lens of traditional gender norms, which would not offer opportunities to change their roles within conservative societies.⁴⁴

Though some of these women have voluntarily joined these groups, it is important to highlight the fact that in some conflicts around the world, many women are forcibly brought into the group through abduction, with the intended purpose of commodifying their bodies for sex and as slaves.⁴⁵ In cases where women voluntarily join, it is widely understood that they have joined due to the lack of opportunities within their community and to leave abusive situations. This lack of opportunities as the main driver to join armed groups, however, can be used to contest the meaning of voluntary involvement. Because of the circumstances the women face on a day to day basis and because of their limited options, the choice to join an armed group may be a question of

⁴¹ Democratic Progress Institute. "DDR and Former Female Combatants", 2015, pp. 26

⁴² Ibid

⁴³ Marks, Zoe. "Gender, Social Networks, and Conflict Processes", *Feminist@law*, vol 9, no 1, 2019, pp. 4-5

⁴⁴ Ibid

⁴⁵ Ollek, Maya Oza. "Forgotten females: Women and girls in post-conflict disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programs", *Department of Political Science*, McGill University, Montreal, August 2007, pp. 20

seeking livelihood opportunities.⁴⁶ In such volatile environments, it is doubtful that their decision to join is completely voluntary, which has been echoed by several authors.⁴⁷ Their arguments are based on the fact that since these women already have limited access to opportunities, the incentive to join an armed group is appealing as a way to survive.

On the other hand, women of all ages are abducted through physical and psychological sexual and gender-based violence and trauma.⁴⁸ In some cases, their initiation process involves killing “family or village members in order to break their ties to their village.”⁴⁹ This tactic has been used by armed group leaders to destroy any chance they may have to return to their communities. Because they have committed such a crime, armed group leaders are able to engrave the feeling of alienation by reminding them of the atrocities they have committed. By understanding that their communities will no longer accept them, the recruits are willing to stay within the armed groups as they provide them with employment and protection. However, it is worth highlighting that the element of protection is only from homelessness and livelihood, as once in the armed groups, many women will be subjected to sexual and gender-based violence. In some cases, in order to avoid such treatment, women will seek protection from such abuse by

⁴⁶ *Idem*, pp.18

⁴⁷ *Ibid*

⁴⁸ Hazen, Jennifer M. “Social Integration of Ex-Combatants after Civil War”, pp. 4

⁴⁹ *Ibid*

seeking a husband through a bush marriage⁵⁰ as this may improve their social status and benefits within the armed group.⁵¹

As a result of the ways in which women have been recruited into armed groups, it can be argued that the benefits of DDR strategies, particularly reintegration support, is extremely important for women as they return home. Once a conflict ends, the reintegration process has the ability to help ex-combatants reintegrate into their communities by working across the lines of conflict to help all parties understand the circumstances they faced. Arguably, with no support or network, and having been discounted as fighters by DDR programming, women face additional rooted in sexual and gender-based violence and the status of women in society.

Women in Conflict and Post-Conflict Discussions

While women have been participating in armed conflict for centuries, war and armed conflict remain a male-dominated perception and composition, with women and girls viewed primarily as wives and camp followers, as opposed to *real* soldiers.⁵² As a result, women are systematically left out of negotiations at all levels as they are often seen as more peaceful than men, hence not a threat to the establishment of peace.⁵³ National leaders, particularly male politicians, have used the rhetoric that women represent a lower risk level than their male-

⁵⁰ According to Maya Oza Ollek, female combatants will be forced into bush marriages depending on the roles they play. “Many females [are] treated as the sexual property of commanders and of combatants through ‘bush marriages.’ Wives typically received more privileges, such as a weapon for protection and better access to food. Commanders’ wives were left in charge of camps in their absence. Some abducted children attached themselves to these wives to secure additional protection. Commanders’ wives also played a role in directing the small boys units, known for their civilian-directed violence. When wives fell out of favour, they were sent to be combatants.” Information taken from: Ollek, Maya Oza. “Forgotten females: Women and girls in post-conflict disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programs”, *Department of Political Science*, McGill University, Montreal, August 2007, pp. 45

⁵¹ Ollek, Maya Oza. “Forgotten females: Women and girls in post-conflict disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programs”, *Department of Political Science*, McGill University, Montreal, August 2007, pp. 21

⁵² MacKenzie, Megan. “Securitization and Desecuritization: Female Soldiers and the Reconstruction of Women in Post-Conflict Sierra Leone”, *Security Studies*, 18:2, 2009, pp. 245

⁵³ *Idem*, pp. 243

counterparts, which continues to contribute to the notion that women are not *real* soldiers.⁵⁴ Historically and traditionally women's participation in society has been largely contained to the local level, mainly concentrating on domestic chores, post-conflict discussions fail to acknowledge their wider roles and implication in armed groups. By not including women in post-conflict reconstruction discussions, negotiators are effectively discounting or ignoring women's right to be heard and to contribute to building a peaceful society. This is an important failure of the decision-making process as negotiators fail to use the added value that many women combatants and leaders could have provided. For example, their contribution to managing local activism is often devalued as it is seen as an unexpected benefit for post-conflict programs, rather than one to be leveraged for peace.⁵⁵ Post-conflict programs continue to disproportionately disregard women and contribute to the development of negative stereotypes facing women.⁵⁶

Harmful stereotypes of women not only hamper policy-makers' understanding of women's roles in conflict, but they ignore the fact that up to 40% of combatants in non-state armed groups are women.⁵⁷ Despite the data pointing towards high implications for women around the world, post-conflict programs overwhelmingly fail to acknowledge women's presence as a starting point towards increasing their representation in all stages of DDR. Although the international community has recognized that there is a need to have humanitarian responses to the needs of women, few have targeted their programming towards female ex-combatants. This is true in the example of Sierra Leone where numerous international organizations mobilized resources to provide support to women and girls in direct need of humanitarian assistance, however, none of

⁵⁴ Ibid

⁵⁵ Speake, Beth. "A Gender Approach to Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution", *University of Leeds*, 2013, pp. 9 <https://www.e-ir.info/2013/02/11/a-gendered-approach-to-peacebuilding-and-conflict-resolution/>

⁵⁶ Gade, Britta. "When women take up arms and what that means for DDR processes", *Polis Blog*, 2019, <https://polis180.org/polisblog/2019/01/18/when-women-take-up-arms-and-what-that-means-for-ddr-processes/>

⁵⁷ Ibid

the programs targeted female combatants further demonstrating the lack of recognition of their needs.⁵⁸

Without the full participation of women in all levels of DDR programs, their needs and lived experiences are often not taken into consideration. Examples from previous processes demonstrate that the participation of women in higher level discussion and program development led towards the consideration of women's experiences and included the question of gender.⁵⁹ It has been demonstrated that when women, particularly those who have been part of armed groups, are able to identify their needs, traditional perspectives can be challenged by introducing new priorities within the DDR programs.⁶⁰ By challenging the traditional gender roles, women and their advocates are able to further increase gender equality across all spheres constituting post-conflict programs. Challenging traditional perspectives is one of many ways in which women add value to high-level discussions, such as post-conflict negotiations.

To further understand the importance of women's presence in high-level discussions, the following section will look at the roles and added value that women can have in the development of DDR programs. In addition, the section will also look at the negative impacts that definitions and eligibility criteria have on women and girls who are left out of DDR programs as a result of male-oriented terminology.

Peace Agreements and Inclusion of Women:

The literature suggests that the lack of women's involvement in higher level discussions, such as those with UN officials, governments, and armed group leaders, has had a negative impact

⁵⁸ MacKenzie, Megan. "Securitization and Desecuritization: Female Soldiers and the Reconstruction of Women in Post-Conflict Sierra Leone", *Security Studies*, 18:2, 2009, pp. 245

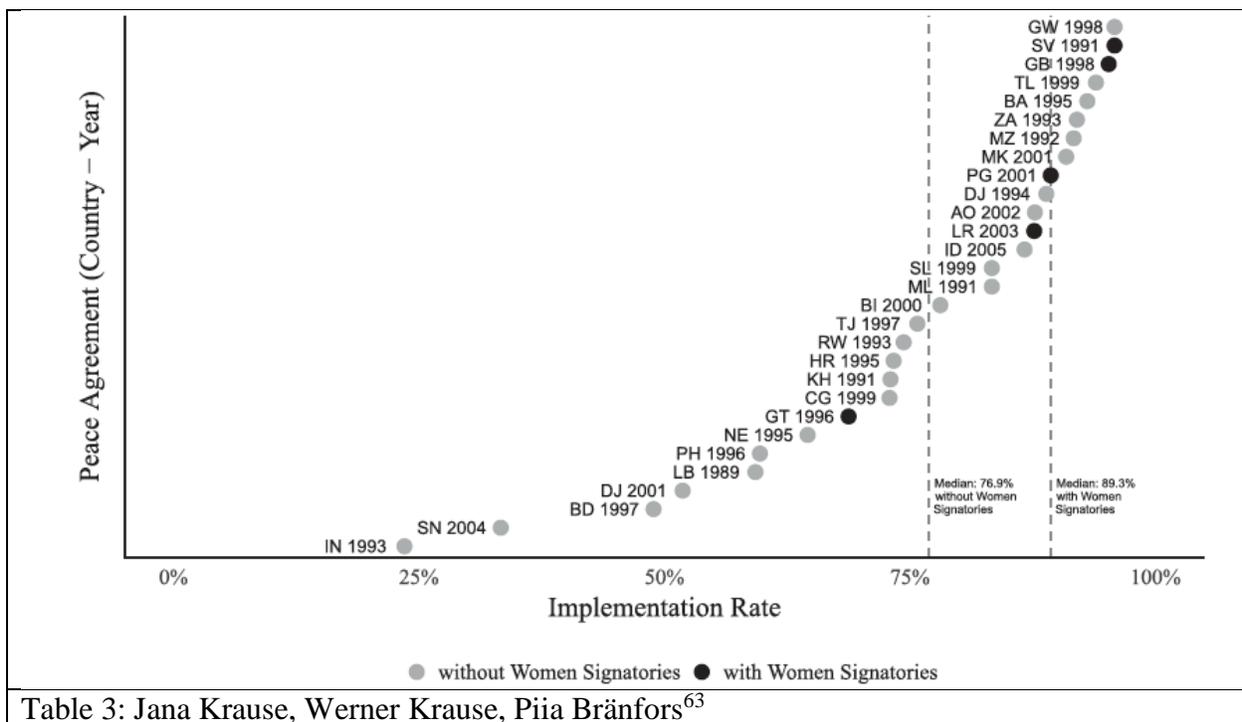
⁵⁹ Democratic Progress Institute. "DDR and Former Female Combatants", 2015, pp. 32

⁶⁰ Ibid

on the outcomes of peace agreements.⁶¹ Although DDR programs are not only contingent on peace agreements, the established language and proposed plans can have a direct impact on the types of post-conflict programs, and inherently, on who will benefit from these programs.

It is widely acknowledged that if a higher representation of women were present during these discussions and negotiations, peace agreements would be more likely to be reached and implemented than when they are excluded from the peace process.⁶²

The following table serves to demonstrate that there is a higher level of peace agreements implemented when women are signatories, with a median of 89.3%, whereas only 76.9% of peace agreements are implemented when women are not signatories.



⁶¹ MacKenzie, Megan. "Securitization and Desecuritization: Female Soldiers and the Reconstruction of Women in Post-Conflict Sierra Leone", *Security Studies*, 18:2, 2009, pp. 243

⁶² Ibid

⁶³ Krause, Jana., Krause, Werner., Bränfors, Piia. "Women's Participation in Peace Negotiations and the Durability of Peace", *International Interactions*, 44:6, 2018, pp. 1002, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03050629.2018.1492386>

The analysis presented above highlights the notion that throughout the years, women have not played a significant role in peace agreements despite the acknowledgment of DDR practitioners, UN officials, as well as governments that by including women in higher level discussions there is a higher chance that their different needs and priorities will be considered in post-conflict programs. What this analysis does not highlight is the added value that women's involvement in these discussions could have around DDR, such as addressing program specific aspects. Currently, DDR programs continue to be handicapped by limited knowledge of women's lived experiences. By expanding the knowledge on these beneficiaries, post-conflict programs could change the pattern of wealth distribution, therefore benefiting the well-being of society.⁶⁴ Although in theory this could be addressed despite the lack of women amongst the negotiators, there is a strong correlation that when women are not in leadership positions, negotiations continue to maintain exclusionary attitudes towards them.⁶⁵ Post-conflict opportunities, therefore, do not meet the intended benefits for women as these opportunities are often constructed around the needs of male combatants.⁶⁶

Despite recent progress, women's participation in high-level discussions has remained significantly low and stagnant. In a study looking at peace agreements between 1990 and 2012, it was shown that only 2.5% of the signatories to these agreements were women, demonstrating that in over two decades of peace negotiations, women have for the most part been excluded from playing any significant role.⁶⁷ A similar study looked at the mention of women in 585 peace

⁶⁴ Marks, Zoe. "Gender, Social Networks, and Conflict Processes", *Feminist@law*, vol 9, no 1, 2019, pp. 6

⁶⁵ Rutherford, Lauren. "Women, Peace and Security: Examining the Impact of Resolution 1325 on UN Disarmament and Demobilization Programs", *Queen's Policy Review*, vol. 1, no. 1, p. 4

⁶⁶ Farr, Vanessa A. "The importance of a gender perspective to successful disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes", *Disarmament Forum*, 2003, pp. 30

⁶⁷ Haynes, Dina Francesca., Cahn, Naomi., Ni Aoláin. "Women in the Post-Conflict Process: Reviewing the Impact of Recent UN Actions in Achieving Gender Centrality", *Santa Clara Journal of International Law*, 11(1), 2012, pp. 195

agreement from 1990 to 2010. Throughout all of these peace agreements, only 16% (92 agreements) included specific mentions to women, highlighting their omission from all subsequent benefit ex-combatants may be eligible upon the signature of the agreement.⁶⁸ Similarly to other authors, Vanessa A. Farr suggests that the lack of women's representation and participation in peace negotiations has upheld the exclusion of women's needs, as they are not taken into consideration, and can lead to long-term consequences on the development of the country.⁶⁹

The argument of the long-term negative impacts caused by the lack of gender-inclusion has been echoed by a number of authors who all agree on one thing: women's voices need to be heard. Evidently, pushing for greater inclusion and gender representation at this stage is needed as it will shape the desired outcomes of post-conflict programs, including how power will be distributed and how women and men will experience post-conflict programs.⁷⁰ In an effort to bridge the gap in discussion, women-led non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have led efforts to include women's voices in negotiations, or even in DDR programming, but have been denied a consultation role in many instances.⁷¹ Helen Basini argues that the lack of inclusion of women's NGOs may be a result of leaders in charge of peace agreement negotiations not recognizing them as specialists in post-conflict reconstruction.⁷² For example, during Liberia's peacebuilding consultations, instead of making way for women organizations to have a role in the negotiations, so-called "experts" from Sierra Leone and Kosovo were brought into the discussion as they were

⁶⁸ Democratic Progress Institute. "DDR and Former Female Combatants", 2015, pp. 31

⁶⁹ Farr, Vanessa A. "Gender-aware Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR): A Checklist", pp. 3

⁷⁰ Marks, Zoe. "Gender, Social Networks, and Conflict Processes", *Feminist@law*, vol 9, no 1, 2019, pp. 5

⁷¹ Basini, Helen S. A. "Gender Mainstreaming Unraveled: The Case of DDR in Liberia", *International Interactions*, 39, 2013, pp. 543

⁷² Ibid

seen as better placed.⁷³ Not only did this mean that women's specific lived-experience in Liberia were not considered, but they were not even understood as no one around the table could efficiently advocate on their behalf.

What the Liberian cases demonstrate is that local women led organizations tend not to be taken seriously as mediators as they lack status within the international community. This is despite the fact that such organizations are often able to provide in-depth knowledge of the different challenges women face on a daily basis, particularly in a country-specific context. The recognition of their added value is starting to be increasingly recognized which has led to the creation of groups of women in high-level position. For example, in 2017, the African Union established *The Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation (FemWise-Africa)* which aims to include more women in mediation roles.⁷⁴ Statistics from the United Nations Development Fund for Women demonstrate that “since 1992, only 2.4% of signatories to peace agreements were women and that no woman has ever been appointed as “chief mediator.”⁷⁵ These statistics are important to understand as they demonstrate the potential impact that a group such as FemWise-Africa could have. While it is still early in the establishment of this group, so far, 60 women have been appointed to the group, of which many have held high-level position in previous conflict settings, it stands a chance to address some of gender disparities.⁷⁶ However, it is important to caution that while this group could make significant strides in including more women mediators, the members of this group do not necessarily have the same lived experiences. Further outreach to local women's

⁷³ Ibid

⁷⁴ Ani, Ndubuisi Christian. “Fem-Wise-Africa set to boost women's role in peace processes”, *Institute For Security Studies*, 2018, pp. 2 <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/femwise-africa-set-to-boost-womens-role-in-peace-processes>

⁷⁵ Rutherford, Lauren. “Women, Peace and Security: Examining the Impact of Resolution 1325 on UN Disarmament and Demobilization Programs”, *Queen's Policy Review*, vol. 1, no. 1, p. 9

⁷⁶ Ani, Ndubuisi Christian. “Fem-Wise-Africa set to boost women's role in peace processes”, *Institute For Security Studies*, 2018, pp. 2 <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/femwise-africa-set-to-boost-womens-role-in-peace-processes>

organizations is still needed as these are the women who bear the burden of caring for their families before, during, and after the conflict. It is for these women that FemWise-Africa should seek to “define what peace and security mean and how to achieve these in the extraordinarily complex environments of today’s conflicts.”⁷⁷ As part of defining how peace and security can be achieved, mediators should seek to change the conception of who is a combatant in order to increase the beneficiaries of DDR programs.

Barriers Within the Established Terminology

Can Women be Combatants?

Identifying who the combatants are within the peace agreement is an important starting point in the development and implementation of DDR programs as it will impact the type of programming that will take place. In cases where women are not considered combatants, this will mean that they will not receive the same level of support as men, nor will they have access to any of the post-conflict programming, hence, leaving many in the vicious cycle of poverty. This is an important concept to understand as DDR programs are able to offer a significant amount of support to those who are eligible. If the definition in the peace agreement is set up in a way that excludes minority groups, such as women and youth, long-term development and peace is at risk. In some cases, such as Sierra Leone, peace was fostered despite women’s exclusion from the DDR negotiations. However, while this is possible, negotiators should seek to enhance peace agreements through the inclusion of all minorities. Without direct changes in who is a combatant, post-conflict

⁷⁷ Mahmoud, Youssef. “Can FemWise-Africa Make Mediation Work for Sustainable Peace?”, *Global Observatory*, 2018 <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2018/06/can-femwise-make-mediation-work-sustaining-peace/>

programs risk to exclude a large portion of the population and therefore should not be considered as a viable way to move forward.

Definitions of combatants often rely on gendered stereotypes and outdated documents. According to the definitions established in the Third Geneva Convention of 1949, in relation to persons involved in armed conflicts, “a combatant is a person who: is a member of a national army or an irregular military; or is actively participating in military activities and hostilities; or is involved in recruiting or training military personnel; or holds a command or decision-making position within a national army or an armed organization; or arrived in a host country carrying arms or in military uniform or as part of a military structure; or having arrived in a host country as an ordinary civilian, thereafter assumes, or shows determination to assume, any of the above attributes.”⁷⁸ Although women who participate in armed conflicts could fall under many of these criteria, the lack of explicit mention tends to disqualify women from being recognized as combatants. Even in Sierra Leone women did not take part in DDR programs as there was an understanding that combatants were men with guns.⁷⁹ Because of the lack of explicit inclusivity and generic misunderstandings of who and what a combatant is, there is an even greater importance for women to be involved in negotiations to ensure that misconceptions are addressed. By moving forward with a definition that explicitly does not mention women, the misconceptions of what constitutes a combatant continues to be upheld and not questioned. A more in depth and comprehensive definition would allow practitioners to better target who can and should be part of the DDR process.

⁷⁸ United Nations. “Operational Guide to the Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards”, 2014, pp. 24, <http://unddr.org/uploads/documents/Operational%20Guide.pdf>

⁷⁹ MacKenzie, Megan. “Securitization and Desecuritization: Female Soldiers and the Reconstruction of Women in Post-Conflict Sierra Leone”, *Security Studies*, 18:2, 2009, pp. 251

Previous DDR programs have demonstrated that when the definitions are established in a manner that includes women and youth, DDR implementing partners have a greater reach in the community and can increase the number of beneficiaries. The Liberian DDR program can be used as a successful example where women were included in the definition, despite not taken part in the peace agreement discussion. In this example, the DDR process was able to reach more than 112,000 beneficiaries by explicitly mentioning women and children as combatants.⁸⁰ The experience in Liberia is a good model for other DDR programming as the UN agencies who administered the programming took into consideration the needs of the most vulnerable groups. However, it should be noted that while it did take into consideration the different needs, it should not be taken as an example for gender equality at the decision-making level. Based on this example, defining who is a combatant has a significant impact on the type of programming provided and who the beneficiaries will be. By including women in high-level negotiations, vulnerable groups, including dependents, orphans, and female combatants, further access to post-conflict programs will be possible as their needs stand better chances to be recognized and defined. In cases where women have been able to access DDR programs despite the lack of representation across all levels, it can be assumed that more women could have benefited from the program had there been more advocacy to change the defining factor of a combatant. However, establishing who is a combatant is often not enough to include vulnerable populations into the DDR strategy, as in some cases, they are not eligible to part take in the process.

⁸⁰ Hanson, Stephanie. "Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) in Africa", *Council on Foreign Relations*, 2015, <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounders/disarmament-demobilization-and-reintegration-ddr-africa>

Who is Eligible for DDR?

While the intention of establishing eligibility criteria is to facilitate the process of identifying who should be the beneficiaries of post-conflict programs, they should be designed in a way that does not bring unfair or unnecessary barriers for those who would benefit from DDR programming. A telling example brought out of the literature review is from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) where the policy of “one weapon, one combatant” was established.⁸¹ This type of eligibility criteria is problematic for many reasons. First, it was demonstrated that in many armed groups, not every soldier has access to a weapon, nor do they have their own. In many cases, due to the lack of supplies, many combatants will end up sharing weapons between themselves. As this is the case, not all combatants would be eligible as they are not able to be processed in the disarmament stage. In the case of the DRC, the leader of the group examined reported that the group only had 30 weapons, which under the eligibility criteria, only 30 combatants would be able to access DDR programming.⁸² Second, this policy maintains the assumption that combatants are fighting with firearms, which is not always the case. In many instances, the weapons used vary from machetes, knives, and even spears. This was the case for members of the Mai-Mai Kifuafua in the DRC who reported that weapons of all sorts were generally kept in a depot and were only distributed to guards or combatants when heading into combat.⁸³ Further research from Ana Leao and Courtney Rowe has demonstrated that such policies directly exclude certain combatants from the initial stages of DDR.⁸⁴ Their research concentrated on Somalia where the “one weapon, one combatant” policy implicitly excluded women from DDR

⁸¹ Banholzer, Lilli. “When do disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Programme Succeed?”, *German Development Institute*, Discussion Paper, August 2014, pp. 24

⁸² Ibid

⁸³ Ibid

⁸⁴ United Nations Instraw. “Virtual Discussion on Gender and Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration”, pp. 6

programming due to their unequal status to men. These examples from the DRC and Somalia demonstrate the need for more inclusive eligibility criteria as vulnerable groups will unnecessarily be left out of much-needed programming.

There is considerable evidence that handing in a weapon as the only eligibility criteria have excluded women and other severely disadvantaged groups, such as youth involved in conflict. Even Sierra Leone, which is viewed as an example to follow, included exclusionary eligibility criteria within their DDR program.⁸⁵ As a result, the number of women who have benefited from the formal participation in DDR is significantly lower than it could have been. Although some women are able to adhere to this criterion, a large proportion of other minority groups are denied access. By failing to seek better ways to identify the beneficiaries, DDR programs foster an environment where women and children are forced to stay under the control of the armed groups or are forced to make the decision to self-demobilize without the proper tools and support. Despite the UN Integrated DDR Standards (IDDRS) guidelines, established in 2014, which explicitly provide guidance on the provision of measures ensuring the inclusions of female combatants, there are few observable changes regarding their eligibility.⁸⁶ Even the international definition of “females associated with armed forces and groups (FAAFG)”, as established by the IDDRS, needs to be broadened to include their roles in the combat aspect of armed groups.⁸⁷ As it currently stands, the FAAFAG definition only sees women in supportive roles rather than combatants, thus reinforcing the misconception that women in armed groups only play roles such as cooks, nurses, administrators, and other general logistical roles essential for the continuation of war, as opposed

⁸⁵ Democratic Progress Institute. “DDR and Former Female Combatants”, 2015, pp. 35

⁸⁶ United Nations. “Operational Guide to the Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards”, 2014, pp. 29, <http://unddr.org/uploads/documents/Operational%20Guide.pdf>

⁸⁷ Ollek, Maya Oza. “Forgotten females: Women and girls in post-conflict disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programs”, *Department of Political Science*, McGill University, Montreal, August 2007, pp. 33

to armed combatants. Both Maya Oza Ollek and Vanessa A. Farr have argued that the restriction of this definition has negatively impacted the way women are perceived and used during and after conflicts. By using this as the commonly used definition, women's roles in armed groups are reduced to purely supporting roles, diminishing their contributions, and therefore reduces their chances of being eligible for DDR programming. By including the explicit mention of women in combatants roles within peace negotiations, post-conflict programs practitioners will be better equipped to include this vulnerable group as programming decisions will be based on more inclusive criteria. Without changes in the policies dictating the criteria, exclusionary language will continue to hamper to way forward with DDR programming.

Policies Influencing DDR Program Design

Policies on Women:

The case for the integration of women in international forums and into the peace agreements is not new. For over two decades, international policies have been calling out policy-makers, UN agencies, and NGOs to include women in all of their programming, even in cases where fast programing is needed. Despite policies calling out for more gender-specific language as a way to address the needs of women, there has been little improvement towards their participation in DDR programs. Amongst the list of significant policies which specifically mention women and gender-specific improvement, the *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*, launched in 1995 remains one of the earlier versions of policy which sees women as active participants in armed conflicts.⁸⁸ Although it did not highlight the DDR process within the document, it did call for the international community to pay attention to women's needs, as well

⁸⁸ Ollek, Maya Oza. "Forgotten females: Women and girls in post-conflict disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programs", *Department of Political Science*, McGill University, Montreal, August 2007, pp. 22

as providing women with the equal right of participating in high-level decision-making.⁸⁹ It is significant to mention this declaration since during its development, DDR programs were in their first generation. This means that had policy-makers and implementing agencies taken on board the recommendation at this stage, it can be assumed that in some cases, women would have been given a bigger role in the development of post-conflict programs, which would have had beneficial impacts on future generations. However, despite this call for action, between 2000 and 2016, only 7% of the signed peace agreements have specific mentions of gender provision implementation modalities, demonstrating that there has been insufficient attention towards the respect of this international policy.⁹⁰

Difficulties of implementing gender consideration into DDR, especially at the policy level, can also be found through the DPKO document. A review by Vanessa A. Farr demonstrates that “while [the document] does make an effort to ‘engender’ its work by referring to both male and female soldiers, it epitomizes an ‘add women and stir’ approach since the authors have not examined, with enough care, the practical challenges that might arise when their strategies are applied to women soldiers.”⁹¹ Without proper gender analysis and consideration, policy-makers continue to be unable to address the proper needs of women. By simply adding women to the same set of guidelines used for male combatants focused DDR activities, women will continue to be alienated due to the lack of gender-sensitive⁹² programming. Further gender analysis is needed for

⁸⁹ Ibid

⁹⁰ United Nation Women. “Facts and figures: Peace and security”, <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/peace-and-security/facts-and-figures>

⁹¹ Marcaillou, Agnes. “The Gender Action Plan for the UN Department of Disarmament Affairs”, *Disarmament Forum*, no. 4, 2003, pp. 47

⁹² The World Health Organization defines gender-sensitivity as policies “take into account the different social roles of men and women that lead to women and men having different needs.” Furthermore, there is three types of gender-sensitive policies: gender-neutral, gender-specific, and gender-redistributive. “Gender-neutral policies are not aimed specifically at either men or women and are assumed to affect both sexes equally. A gender-neutral policy allocates resources to meet specific goals[.]...Gender-specific policies acknowledge that women’s gender-related needs have been neglected in the past and advocate on behalf of gender equality. Such policies identify specific strategies

the implementation of DDR programs as this analysis will be able to identify the inequalities that women and men face in post-conflict settings. For example, the analysis could provide practitioners with information such as the need for gender-specific kits that are provided during the demobilization stage. Such kits should include menstrual hygiene products, and not only clothes and food.⁹³ Further analysis could even lead towards the development of a gender toolkit which DDR practitioners could use to help inform their decisions. Vanessa A. Farr has also suggested this by developing a checklist to promote gender awareness.⁹⁴

Additionally, the *United Nations Security Council's Resolution 1325*, passed in 2000 (known as the resolution on Women, Peace and Security seeks to protect women's rights in conflicts), sought to address these gender considerations within high-level decisions directly impacting beneficiaries.⁹⁵ While one of the main goals of Resolution 1325 is to increase women's participation in the peace process, it particularly increases the recognition around local women's capabilities to drive the DDR programs.⁹⁶ The momentum that was built around this resolution, as well as the attention it still receives today, is in fact quite disappointing when looking into the specifics of the resolution. While the resolution called for significant improvements, it failed to move away from the rhetoric of women playing supportive roles by supporting DDR programs

that are appropriate for women. [...] Gender-redistributive policies recognize that because of political and economic inequality, women are often excluded or disadvantaged in terms of access to social and economic resources and involvement in decision-making. The goal of gender-redistributive policies is to rebalance the power structure to create a more balanced relationship between men and women." Information taken from: World Health Organization. Gender, Women, and the Tobacco Epidemic: 10. How to Make Policies More Gender-Sensitive, *Policies and Strategies*, pp. 194-195,

www.who.int/tobacco/publications/gender/en_tfi_gender_women_how_make_policies_more_gender_sensitive.pdf

⁹³ Banholzer, Lilli. "When do disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Programme Succeed?", *German Development Institute*, Discussion Paper, August 2014, pp.15

⁹⁴ Farr, Vanessa A. "Gender-aware Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR): A Checklist", pp. 1-13

⁹⁵ Ollek, Maya Oza. "Forgotten females: Women and girls in post-conflict disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programs", *Department of Political Science*, McGill University, Montreal, August 2007, pp. 23

⁹⁶ Farr, Vanessa. "Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Processes: Where Do Women Stand", *Women in an Insecure World: Violence against Women Facts, Figures and Analysis*, Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, 2005, pp. 197

influencing male combatants to not only participate in post-conflict programs but also maintain the peace.⁹⁷ What would have made the resolution more significant for DDR programs is the recognition within the resolution that women play different roles as agents of changes in conflict settings.

Despite the efforts put forward by the various policies to bring substantive changes in regards of gender equality, the evidence from DDR programs analyzed in this paper demonstrate that women are still largely left out of all aspects of post-conflict program developments. According to Vanessa A. Farr, better gender mainstreaming in regards of women's many roles fall under the larger picture of urging, "women's informed and active participation in disarmament exercises, and insists on the right of women to carry out their post-conflict reconstruction activities in an environment free from threat, especially of sexualized violence."⁹⁸ The United Nations Department of Disarmament Affairs (UNDDA) has also acknowledged this disparity by calling for greater gender-sensitive programs that take into consideration the eligibility of vulnerable groups and their needs.⁹⁹ However, there is little evidence that significant changes, particularly on the participation of women in all levels of program design has been taken into consideration. For example, gender-sensitive language within peace agreements continues to be left out, with only 3 out of 11 peace agreement signed in 2017 containing any gender-sensitive language.¹⁰⁰ Despite the recognition to include greater gender-sensitive language within the peace agreements to better include women in the DDR process.

⁹⁷ Ollek, Maya Oza. "Forgotten females: Women and girls in post-conflict disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programs", *Department of Political Science*, McGill University, Montreal, August 2007, pp. 23

⁹⁸ Farr, Vanessa A. "Gender-aware Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR): A Checklist", pp. 2

⁹⁹ Ollek, Maya Oza. "Forgotten females: Women and girls in post-conflict disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programs", *Department of Political Science*, McGill University, Montreal, August 2007, pp. 25

¹⁰⁰ United Nation Women. "Facts and figures: Peace and security", <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/peace-and-security/facts-and-figures>

Policies on Youth:

While there has been some improvement and policy work to include women as peacebuilding agents, the majority of the policies regarding the status of women in conflict and in post-conflict settings have also recognized youth as a vulnerable group. Like women, youth face similar situations when seeking access into DDR programs. While it is not suggested that they get involved in high-level discussions, it is commonly understood that if women were to be included in those negotiations, the needs of youth would also be taken into consideration. Since the study of youth in armed conflict is still fairly new, the study of girls in conflicts and their needs is even newer. For many years, it was considered that youth in conflicts were mainly boys. However, it has been demonstrated that out of approximately 300,000 youths involved in conflicts around the world, 120,000 (40%) are girls, mirroring the makeup of adult combatants.¹⁰¹ Taking into consideration that nearly half of the youth involved in conflicts are girls, there is an increased need to develop language within the policies which favours their participation in youth-focused DDR programs. The IDDRS was the first document to have a specific section on children and their needs, as well as women within the DDR process as they are the most vulnerable group to go through self-demobilization.¹⁰² The document argues that since youth, especially adolescents, are marginalized and are between legal categories (i.e. youth or adults) they are not considered eligible for DDR program.¹⁰³ This is important to identify since, as it currently stands, there tends to be ambiguity on the legal age of combatants. According to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, 15 is the minimum age of participation, whereas the Convention 182 and the Optional Protocol

¹⁰¹ Ollek, Maya Oza. "Forgotten females: Women and girls in post-conflict disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programs", *Department of Political Science*, McGill University, Montreal, August 2007, pp. 17

¹⁰² Idem, pp. 32

¹⁰³ Idem, pp. 33

sees the minimum as 18.¹⁰⁴ However, the *Cape Town Principles and Best Practices on the Recruitment of Children into the Armed Forces and on Demobilization and Social Reintegration of Child Soldiers in Africa* is the most commonly used definition for Child Soldier. According to this document, a child soldier is “any person under 18 years of age who is part of any kind of regular or irregular armed force or armed group in any capacity, including but not limited to cooks, porters, messengers, and anyone accompanying such groups, other than family members.”¹⁰⁵ By establishing 18 as the legal age of adulthood, the documents seek to reduce any ambiguity as to the eligibility of young combatants. Nonetheless, despite these policies, young girls continue to face additional challenges accessing DDR programs. In instances where boys are included, girls continue to be left out due to poor planning of the programs.¹⁰⁶

Special attention to children and youth-focused DDR programming is needed as child soldiers often face outstandingly difficult challenges when reintegrating their communities. Depending on the group they were part of, and the level of violence they have committed as a result of being part of that group, many communities tend to be hostile to the return of the child soldier as they become afraid of the actions they can commit.¹⁰⁷ For example, in Uganda and in the DRC, many families refused to take back their children after they had been abducted and forced to become child soldiers.¹⁰⁸ Without any access to DDR programs, these communities and children are left with no proper information and support to facilitate the reintegration process. The question

¹⁰⁴ Idem, pp. 26

¹⁰⁵ Unicef. *Cape Town Principles and Best Practices Adopted at the Symposium on the Prevention of recruitment of Children into the Armed Forces and on Demobilization and Social Reintegration of Child Soldiers in Africa, 1997*, pp. 8, [https://www.unicef.org/emerg/files/Cape_Town_Principles\(1\).pdf](https://www.unicef.org/emerg/files/Cape_Town_Principles(1).pdf)

¹⁰⁶ Mazurana, Dylan E., McKay, Susan A., Carlson, Khristopher C., Kasper, Janel C. “Girls in Fighting Forces and Groups: Their Recruitment, Participation, Demobilization, and Reintegration”, *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace and Psychology*, 8(2), 2002, pp. 118

¹⁰⁷ Banholzer, Lilli. “When do disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Programme Succeed?”, *German Development Institute*, Discussion Paper, August 2014, pp.13

¹⁰⁸ Ibid

remains, however, that while there has been significant attention paid towards the inclusion of women and youth, why do they continue to be left out of post-conflict programs?

Left Out or Forgotten?

Despite the large evidence and policies demonstrating the need to include women and youth as beneficiaries, the established system regulating post-conflict programs continue to largely exclude vulnerable groups. Although reintegration is particularly examined in this section of the paper, disarmament and demobilization face their own set of challenges. Disarmament is marked by the lack of guidance around who is considered a combatant when individuals show up to disarmament sites without weapons, which has been discussed throughout the paper. On the other hand, demobilization is limited by the eligibility criteria. Without being able to access the demobilization stage in particular, women are unable to access the necessary counselling sessions, access to food and clothing and all of the other services which are part of the reintegration package. Without going through this process, women do not receive the discharge papers needed to access the reintegration stage of the DDR program. Based on this analysis, when female ex-combatants are left out of the demobilization stage, there are little options made available for them, which can lead to self-demobilization. By having to go through their own self-reintegration, women are left with little to no support when met with challenges in their communities. It is therefore important for practitioners and implementing agencies to understand why women have been left out of the DDR strategies, but most particularly, how the lack of representation of women on all levels of program design has local consequences. Without understanding the core aspects which limit this vulnerable group, policy-makers are unable to make significant changes in the way post-conflict programs are established and implemented.

Why has Reintegration Forgotten Women and Youth?

Based on the above analysis, it can be determined that there is a multitude of factors that can impact the level of participation of women in DDR programs. Evidently, there are numerous other factors which have not been discussed through this specific paper as they speak to issues of funding, psychological impacts on combatants, as well as a focus on stability programs.¹⁰⁹ The overwhelming literature on factors limiting women's participation demonstrates that DDR programs have a long way to go before including gender-sensitive programming, as recommended by multiple policies and guiding documents. Effective gender-sensitive programs particularly during the stage of reintegration should ensure that the benefits provided to ex-combatants, equally benefit women and men.¹¹⁰ This means that regardless of the positions or roles they held before, during, and after the conflict, both women and men should be able to become constructive members of society once they are reintegrated. This, however, can be difficult to achieve as while DDR practitioners can push for gender equality, the society that welcome back the ex-combatants may be upholding traditional gender norms. As such, interventions should be designed to allow women to reintegrate in a way that both respects important gender norms (i.e. does not alienate them from their communities further) while also ensuring they pull equal benefits from the programs.

In addition to developing gender-sensitive programming, it is also important for DDR strategies to create an environment where women feel comfortable presenting themselves as ex-combatants. Research has shown that in many cases, "women associated with combat groups, especially irregular forces, are reluctant to identify themselves as DDR processes begin and thus

¹⁰⁹ Ollek, Maya Oza. "Forgotten females: Women and girls in post-conflict disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programs", *Department of Political Science*, McGill University, Montreal, August 2007, pp. 29

¹¹⁰ African Union Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Capacity Program. "Operational Guideline on DDR for Women", *African Union Commission*, 2014, pp. 24

miss the opportunity to benefit from them.”¹¹¹ The reluctance to identify as an ex-combatant can be linked to the possible stigmatization that they may face. Social stigmatization following the participation in armed conflict can be linked to the fact their communities may not understand their new attitudes towards certain traditional thinking.¹¹² For example, if a woman played a role within the armed group that is traditionally executed by a male, she may not wish to return to her traditional roles within society. She may want to continue contributing to society in male-dominated sectors. The reluctance also stems from evidence that many communities will hesitate to accept reintegration if they fought with abusive units.¹¹³ The research conducted by Macartan Humphreys and Jeremy M. Weinstein has demonstrated that women and youth don’t necessarily have a more difficult time reintegration into society than men, contrary to much of the thinking that they do. Rather, the level of difficulty they face is closely tied with the armed group they were part of.¹¹⁴ They have also reached additional conclusions demonstrating that the socio-economic status of the ex-combatants does not influence the level of acceptance from the community.¹¹⁵ While it is assumed that the majority of the women, as well as the men, who join or are abducted into armed groups come from low socio-economic backgrounds, this aspect has no influence on the level of acceptance.

In addition, women’s perceived risk within a community or lack thereof, continues to be a negative contributing factor identified as part of the eligibility criteria. Because women have often not been seen as fighters, their eligibility has been refused as they are rarely recognized as having

¹¹¹ Farr, Vanessa A. “Gender-aware Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR): A Checklist”, pp. 4

¹¹² Ibid

¹¹³ Humphreys, Macartan, Weinstein, Jeremy M. “Disentangling the Determinants of Successful Demobilization and Reintegration”, Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Washington, DC, 2005, pp. 4

¹¹⁴ Ibid

¹¹⁵ Idem, pp. 20

taken part of the combat instead of being seen as trophy wives, cooks, or information gatherers.¹¹⁶ This is despite the multiple examples where women have been actively involved in the conflict, such as in Sierra Leone. During the civil war, it has been documented that nearly 12% of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) fighters were in fact women.¹¹⁷ However, despite the number of female fighters, only 8% of women and girls, out of all of the beneficiaries, were able to access DDR programming due to the multitude of obstacles created by the eligibility criteria.¹¹⁸ As a direct result of this, women have been forced to self-reintegrate, thus not benefiting from any of the benefits of reintegration programs, such as skills training to access sustainable livelihoods.¹¹⁹ To avoid situations where women are forced to self-reintegrate, which often leads to a situation where they become homeless, isolated and even excluded from paid work due to the lack of support and available opportunities, Vanessa A. Farr suggests that there is a need for the UN and NGOs to increase the number of female staff.¹²⁰ By having more women in these positions, DDR strategies have the potential to move away from the gendered training which is currently available, for example, sewing courses for women, and move towards programming that pays attention to the specific needs and wants of the female combatants.¹²¹ By including women within the ranks of the UN or AU agencies implementing DDR programs, and local NGOs, the likelihood of female combatants to come forward with their needs is higher due to the potentially higher level of trust. For example, FemWise-Africa would be able to raise the concerns voiced by combatants and local

¹¹⁶ Knight, Andy. "Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration and Post-Conflict Peacebuilding in Africa: An Overview", *African Security*, 1:1, 2008, pp. 45

¹¹⁷ Ibid

¹¹⁸ Ollek, Maya Oza. "Forgotten females: Women and girls in post-conflict disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programs", *Department of Political Science*, McGill University, Montreal, August 2007, pp. 46

¹¹⁹ Farr, Vanessa A. "Gender-aware Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR): A Checklist", pp. 4

¹²⁰ Ibid

¹²¹ Basini, Helen S. A. "Gender Mainstreaming Unraveled: The Case of DDDR in Liberia", *International Interactions*, 39, 2013, pp. 537

women organizations during program design, which would then have better chances of being addressed. In order for DDR programs to change towards better representation, there is a need to increase the level of information sharing across all levels, as well as working together and not in silos.

Gender-Sensitive Recommendations for DDR Programs

Based on the analysis above, it is clear that the lack of women's representation in high-level position in the UN system and in NGOs, as well as the lack of women who understand the local context and have experienced the conflict, within post-conflict negotiations, has hindered the way female combatants are perceived and access DDR programming. Although there has been some improvement through the establishment of policies which directly seek to increase the level of participation of women at all levels of peace negotiations, the evidence that nearly all peace agreements signed in 2017 did not include women provision, demonstrates that policy-makers still have a long way to go.

The following recommendations and considerations should, therefore, be forethought when DDR strategies are discussed. Evidently, the country context and the political situation should be analyzed in all conflict and post-conflict situation to better implement DDR strategies, and all DDR programming should be country specific as DDR strategies are not a "one-size fits all" process.

Enhanced Representation:

As demonstrated by the data above, it has been suggested that when there is a greater representation of women involved in high-level discussion, there are higher chances that the peace will remain. By involving women in the discussion, particularly female combatants, they will be

able to bring a holistic view of the larger societal issues into the discussion, such as political participation, security, and gender issues.¹²² However, decision-making bodies need to include women from different social classes, ethnic background, and age within the discussion. Without doing so, decision-making bodies risk perceiving women as a monolithic group as opposed to diverse groups with different lived experiences and needs. Moreover, increasing gender issues through representation has been brought forward by a number of authors, such as Vanessa A. Farr, who suggests that women's involvement increases the likelihood that gender issues are considered, though gender equality may not be guaranteed.¹²³ By opening the conversation to gender issues, there is a better chance that gender equality will eventually be considered, despite the patriarchal systems in place. While higher representation of women in general is important, there is a need for inclusion of the various issues' women from different social background face depending on where they live. For women from a minority ethnic background, for example, they may face a different set of challenges when seeking to participate in post-conflict programs, compared to women who are from a majority ethnic background. As such, it is vital for decision-making bodies seek the inclusion of a variety of individuals with different lived experiences. This also includes the representation of women who fought in different armed groups. Although establishing gender equality within the decision-making bodies may not always be a reality in many conservative societies, it has been demonstrated that in countries where there is greater gender equality, peace stands a better chance as women are able to express their voices and increase their political participation.¹²⁴

¹²² Krause, Jana., Krause, Werner., Bränfors, Piia. "Women's Participation in Peace Negotiations and the Durability of Peace", *International Interactions*, 44:6, 2018, pp. 990, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03050629.2018.1492386>

¹²³ Ollek, Maya Oza. "Forgotten females: Women and girls in post-conflict disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programs", *Department of Political Science*, McGill University, Montreal, August 2007, pp. 31

¹²⁴ Krause, Jana., Krause, Werner., Bränfors, Piia. "Women's Participation in Peace Negotiations and the Durability of Peace", *International Interactions*, 44:6, 2018, pp. 990, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03050629.2018.1492386>

However, there are on-going debates on how increasing women representation can be done. While this concept is often something that is expressed in policies and recommendation from the international community, there are few concrete methods in which this can be achieved. Amongst the methods that have been trialled in different contexts, not only for post-conflict programs, has been the introduction of quotas. The introduction of quotas is not a new concept since for many years, multiple countries in Africa have trailed the concept on political levels. For example, in the discussions leading up to a peace accord in Burundi, women's representation was significantly low.¹²⁵ However, while their political representation was low, a small group of women came together and made recommendations, including the introduction of gender quotas, which has made a difference in the way that women are able to engage in important decisions.¹²⁶ While quotas may not necessarily be the best or only way to increase representation within decision-making bodies, it stands the chance to increase gender awareness. Important international decision-making groups have also taken on this idea of quotas. The African Union, for example, has established gender quotas for decision regarding DDR and peace-accord.¹²⁷ Important structural shift, such as these are needed to see effective change. However, while quotas may be a way to see better representation, it should not be taken at face value. The danger of introducing quotas in decision-making bodies for DDR programs is the risk that this important the challenge becomes a box-ticking exercise. There is a need to move beyond the ideology that by just having women present, decision comply with the international recommendation. The ideas and recommendations tabled by these women need to be taken seriously to ensure that DDR program is truly gender-sensitive.

¹²⁵ Byrne, Siobhan., McCulloch, Allison. "Gender, Representation and Power-Sharing in Post-Conflict Institutions", *International Peacekeeping*, Vol. 19, No. 5, 2012, pp. 574

¹²⁶ Ibid

¹²⁷ African Union Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Capacity Program. "Operational Guideline on DDR for Women", *African Union Commission*, 2014, pp. 10

Through their recommendation, DDR programs have the potential to change the normative framework established by dated policies and language. In particular, the definition of combatants and their eligibility criteria can highly benefit from further consideration on the different barriers facing women. By having more inclusive and expanded definitions of combatants, which includes the supporting roles women often have in armed groups, there would be a higher participation rate of female combatants within the DDR process.¹²⁸

Programming Assessments:

As examined, despite the lessons learned from the in the previous iteration of DDR since the 1990s, there is a need to continue the work in including women in the early stages of DDR program design. By integrating women and female combatants in the planning of programming activities, the UN and NGO implementing agencies will be placed to address the specific needs of women when entering post-conflict programs. It has also been understood from the research that women are needed in the planning of DDR programs as they can better address some of the operational challenges faced on the ground. By addressing the structural constraints within the DDR process, such as the ways in which weapons are collected, the additional contribution of women would help better understand how and why not all women are able to participate. In addition, their contribution would help to better inform the programming, which has been identified as needed if DDR wants to succeed in increasing the participation of women.¹²⁹ Particularly, increasing programming assessment and including women in the planning of DDR has an added value towards improving DDR access, such as how cantonment is managed.

¹²⁸ Ollek, Maya Oza. “Forgotten females: Women and girls in post-conflict disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programs”, *Department of Political Science*, McGill University, Montreal, August 2007, pp. 34

¹²⁹ Farr, Vanessa A. “The importance of a gender perspective to successful disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes”, *Disarmament Forum*, 2003, pp. 27

According to Vanessa A. Farr, women-friendly cantonment sites should take care of women and their children's needs, including gender disaggregated sanitation facilities, and specialized healthcare, such as nutrition provisions, nursing facilities, and counselling.¹³⁰ A study in Liberia demonstrated that the lack of female DDR practitioners led to inappropriate gender-sensitive programming and protection which did not take into consideration the specific needs of female ex-combatants.¹³¹ The lack of gender-sensitivity and protection within the current form of cantonment sites can therefore be a deterrent for women who feel their needs will not be met, or if they don't feel safe. In this context, safety can refer to the proximity to their former abusers, which can result in re-traumatization, and physical and/or mental distress. Safety within these sites is a significant concern for many women as they are currently mixed in with all other ex-combatants, including the men who have taken advantage of them within the armed groups. By not separating them, cantonment sites foster an environment where the women are unable to detach themselves from the physical and emotional abuse they may have faced during conflict.

The need for additional information during the onset of the programming discussions and establishment is needed as it will move programming in the direction of gender-inclusion, which has not been the case through the different generation of DDR programming, which have been mostly gender-blind¹³². Since DDR, and more generally the sector of war and peacekeeping, has

¹³⁰ Farr, Vanessa A. "Gender-aware Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR): A Checklist", pp. 5

¹³¹ Basini, Helen S. A. "Gender Mainstreaming Unraveled: The Case of DDR in Liberia", *International Interactions*, 39, 2013, pp. 544-545

¹³² The World Health Organization defines gender-blindness at the policy making level as "the ignoring of the socially determined gender roles, responsibilities, and capabilities of men and women. Gender-blind policies, though they may appear to be unbiased, are often, in fact, based on information derived from men's activities and/or the assumption that women affected by the policies have the same needs and interests as men.¹⁶ For example, policies that target a particular population of smokers (e.g. all smokers or young smokers) may be based exclusively on men's experiences and needs." Information taken from: World Health Organization. Gender, Women, and the Tobacco Epidemic: 10. How to Make Policies More Gender-Sensitive, *Policies and Strategies*, pp. 194, https://www.who.int/tobacco/publications/gender/en_tfi_gender_women_how_make_policies_more_gender_sensitive.pdf

been often associated with men, gender-blindness has been acute due to the fact that men are seen as a bigger threat to national security and peace than women.¹³³ When women's roles continue to be minimized, DDR programs failed to address women's needs as they do not have the proper information to make decisions that will address those needs. As a way forward to increase the representation of women in the program design, it has been recommended to engage their participation in need-based assessments.¹³⁴ While it has been identified that conducting these assessments are not always easy, particularly due to the fact that DDR programming is often implemented in a fairly fast-paced fashion depending on the implementing environment, it is necessary to carry out such assessment as it is one of the fastest ways to get the most critical information on the target population.¹³⁵ Currently, while policies for gender assessment are in place through various recommendations from the UN, the assessment practices are not ideal. While it is understandable that in some context it may require additional work to get this information, it is not impossible. For example, many humanitarian NGOs who work in conflict-affected areas are required to conduct gender-analysis prior to implementing any programming as part of their due diligence. Beneficiaries of such gender assessment within DDR programs, not only men, but women, boys and girls, would hence benefit from holistic programming taking into account their different needs and the different ways they can be met. An important aspect of this engagement is the opportunity for women to share their "specific vision of what successful reintegration of women looks like in a particular cultural context [so that] all reintegration activities can be oriented in that direction."¹³⁶ Without this vision and this crucial information gathered from needs

¹³³ Democratic Progress Institute. "DDR and Former Female Combatants", 2015, pp. 17

¹³⁴ United Nations Instraw. "Virtual Discussion on Gender and Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration", pp. 7

¹³⁵ Ibid

¹³⁶ Idem, pp. 10

assessment and the engagement of women, future DDR programming will continue to fail to address the needs of vulnerable groups and risk to ignore a significant portion of the ex-combatant community.

Training:

Training is the last recommendation made in this paper. Training here refers to two aspects: training of UN agencies and NGO workers who deliver DDR programming in various contexts, as well as the type of livelihood training offered to beneficiaries. The training of employees is an essential first step to take when talking about implementing gender-sensitive programming. With the right skills and knowledge, UN agencies and NGOs would increase their chances of gender mainstreaming, as suggested in Resolution 1325. In many agencies, gender specialists have been hired to conduct such training. By hiring gender specialist with their teams, implementing partners are able to access vital resources that can influence their programming. By having these resources and the training, DDR programs are able to have a wider consideration for the type of programs affecting the beneficiaries.

With the right training in gender and inclusion, provided through consultants and gender specialists, DDR has the chance to incorporate better programming for women and girls who are faced with male-centred programs, activities, and realities. Amongst these activities is the livelihood training offered in the reintegration process. Time and time again, it has been shown that since reintegration has been developed around male beneficiaries, women have not been able to access the type of training they would like to receive. For example, a female beneficiary stated that she “wanted to do hairdressing but they only had four courses and three of them were meant for men and it was hard work.”¹³⁷ Better training opportunities based on what female combatants

¹³⁷ Idem, pp. 548

want to receive would, therefore, enhance their overall experience during reintegration and give them the skills they want to better reintegrate into their communities. Supporting gender-sensitive training activities, however, should not mean that women will no longer have the opportunity to get training in traditional male-type work (masonry, mechanics, carpentry), but rather offer a wider choice to both male and female beneficiaries.

Conclusion

The inclusion of women at all levels of DDR programming is a necessary evolution in the process of Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration. DDR has been used to establish long-term safeguards for peace in communities who have been affected by conflict and to facilitate ex-combatant's civilian reintegration.¹³⁸ To build peace, or create the condition for a peace agreement, DDR practitioners have sought to foster an environment where high-level negotiations are possible. Policies such as Security Council Resolution 1325 have been developed to give women a voice at all levels of peace negotiations and in the agreements but have failed to fully involve women in the design of DDR programming, nor have they prioritized women as beneficiaries.

The failure to involve women during negotiations has continued to hinder perceptions and peace. Although there are cases where countries were able to see great strides towards peace without the inclusion of women during these onset discussions, such as Sierra Leone, opportunities to further improve the status of women through peacebuilding were missed. Seeing as women constitute nearly half of the combatants world-wide, their continued exclusion from such processes means that decision will be made by and for the other half of the population. Crucial to the success of DDR is the demobilization of all combatants and meeting their needs once they return to their

¹³⁸ Banholzer, Lilli. "When do disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Programme Succeed?", *German Development Institute*, Discussion Paper, August 2014, pp. 9

communities, ignoring women's very participation and their post-conflict needs is not conducive to their reintegration. The substantive evidence in multiple country example leads towards the common understanding that when there is a lack of adequate programming and considerations towards the needs beyond those of male ex-combatants, activities will only benefit male participants. Conversely, when women are involved in the planning process, their specific needs have a better chance of being considered and elements such as safe and secure cantonment facilities, proper reintegration kits, and skills training beyond traditionally male sectors, can be provided.

Women's participation in decision-making bodies means there is a stronger likelihood that peace agreements will hold, and that society will transition towards stability. Policy-makers and DDR practitioners, therefore, need to develop stronger mechanisms where they can use the contextual knowledge of women from the communities and societies going through conflict as an additional tool set for better-targeted programming.

In order to build stronger peace that works for everyone, design gender-responsive DDR programs, it is integral for policy-makers to engage with women and their advocates to create negotiating landscape where their input is valued. At all stages of gender-sensitive DDR design and implementation, there will be additional opportunities for female ex-combatants to be involved in post-conflict programs. The initial step of providing training to DDR practitioners is necessary to achieve any of these results. With the global push for women's rights, it is time for DDR to seize the opportunity to grow from lessons learned and develop gender-sensitive DDR strategies for a stronger and fairer peace.

Bibliography

Adinoyi, Julius Adavize. “Importance of Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) in Post Conflict Peacebuilding”, *University of Nairobi*, 2015, pp. 1-18
<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/327861462>

African Union Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Capacity Program. “Operational Guideline on DDR for Women”, *African Union Commission*, 2014, pp. 1-37

Alden, Chris. “Making Old Soldiers Fade Away: Lessons from the reintegration of demobilized Soldiers in Mozambique”, *Department of International Relations*, London School of Economics, Vol. 33(3), 2002, pp. 341-356

Ani, Ndubuisi Christian. “Fem-Wise-Africa set to boost women’s role in peace processes”, *Institute For Security Studies*, 2018, pp. 1-5 <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/femwise-africa-set-to-boost-womens-role-in-peace-processes>

Banholzer, Lilli. “A Macrolevel Perspective on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration of Combatants”, *Department of Politics and Management*, University of Konstanz, 2011, pp.1-16

Banholzer, Lilli. “When do disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Programme Succeed?”, *German Development Institute*, Discussion Paper, August 2014, pp. 1-43

Basini, Helen S. A. “Gender Mainstreaming Unraveled: The Case of DDRR in Liberia”, *International Interactions*, 39, 2013, pp. 535-557

Byrne, Siobhan., McCulloch, Allison. “Gender, Representation and Power-Sharing in Post-Conflict Institutions”, *International Peacekeeping*, Vol. 19, No. 5, 2012, pp. 565-580

Cahn, Naomi. “Women in Post-Conflict Reconstruction: Dilemmas and Directions”, *William and Mary Journal of Women and the Law*, Vol. 12, Issue 2, article 4, 2006, pp. 335–376

Cahn, Naomi, Haynes, Dina Francesca, Aoláin, Fionnuala Ní, “Returning Home: Women in Post-Conflict Societies”, 2010, pp. 339–370

Collier, Paul., Hoeffler, Anke. “Greed and grievance in civil war”, *Oxford Economic Papers*, 56, 2004, pp. 563–595

Cramer, C. “Homo Economicus Goes to War: Methodological Individualism, Rational Choice and the Political Economy of War”, *World Development*, vol. 30, no. 11, 2002, pp. 1845–1864

Democratic Progress Institute. “DDR and ex-Female Combatants”, 2015, pp. 1–94

Durch, William J., Holt, Victoria K., Earle, Caroline R., Shanahan, Moira K. “The Brahimi Report and the Future of UN Peace Operations”, *The Henry L. Stimson Center*, 2003, pp. 1–140

Farr, Vanessa. “Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Processes: Where Do Women Stand”, *Women in an Insecure World: Violence against Women Facts, Figures and Analysis*, Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, 2005, pp. 193–200

Farr, Vanessa A. “Gender-aware Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR): A Checklist”, pp. 1–13

Farr, Vanessa A. “The importance of a gender perspective to successful disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes”, *Disarmament Forum*, 2003, pp. 25–35

Gade, Britta. “When women take up arms and what that means for DDR processes”, *Polis Blog*, 2019, <https://polis180.org/polisblog/2019/01/18/when-women-take-up-arms-and-what-that-means-for-ddr-processes/>

Gizelis, Theodora-Ismene. Afua Pierre, Nana. “Gender Equality and Postconflict Reconstruction: What Do We Need to Know in Order to Make Gender Mainstreaming Work?”, *Commentary*, pp. 601–611

Guzzi, Daniella. “Gender Structural Inequalities in Conflict and Post-Conflict Contexts”, *University of Western Ontario*, 2017, pp. 1–58

Hall, Nina. True, Jacqui. “Gender Mainstreaming in a Post-conflict State”, 2009, pp. 159–174

Hanson, Stephanie. “Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) in Africa”, *Council on Foreign Relations*, 2015, <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounders/disarmament-demobilization-and-reintegration-ddr-africa>

Haynes, Dina Francesca., Cahn, Naomi., Ni Aoláin. “Women in the Post-Conflict Process: Reviewing the Impact of Recent UN Actions in Achieving Gender Centrality”, *Santa Clara Journal of International Law*, 11(1), 2012, pp. 189-217

Hazen, Jennifer M. “Social Integration of Former Combatants after Civil War”, pp. 1–11

Humphreys, Macartan, Weinstein, Jeremy M. “Demobilization and Reintegration”, *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Volume 51, Number 4, August 2007, pp. 531–567

Humphreys, Macartan, Weinstein, Jeremy M. “Disentangling the Determinants of Successful Demobilization and Reintegration”, Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Washington, DC, 2005, pp. 1–29

Humphreys, Macartan, Weinstein, Jeremy M. “Who Fights? The Determinants of Participation in Civil War”, *American Journal of Political Science*, vol 52, no. 2, April 2008, pp. 436–455

International Peace Academy. “A Framework for Lasting Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration of Former Combatants in Crisis Situation”, *IPA-UNDP Workshop Report*, December 2012, pp. 1–16

Kaufman, Joyce P., William, Kristen P. “Women, DDR and Post-conflict Transformation: Lessons from the cases of Bosnia and South Africa”, *Journal of Research in Gender Studies*, vol. 5(2), 2015, pp. 11–53

Knight, Andy. “Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration and Post-Conflict Peacebuilding in Africa: An Overview”, *African Security*, 1:1, 2008, pp. 24–52

Knight, Mark. “Guns, Camps, and Cash: Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration of Former Combatants in Transitions from War to Peace”, *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 41, no. 4, 2004, pp. 499–516

Krause, Jana., Krause, Werner., Bränfors, Piia. “Women’s Participation in Peace Negotiations and the Durability of Peace”, *International Interactions*, 44:6, 2018, pp. 985-1016, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03050629.2018.1492386>

Krikn, Peters, Richards, Paul. “Why We Fight: Voices of Youth Combatants in Sierra Leone”, *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, Vol. 68, No. 2, 1998, pp.183-210

MacKenzie, Megan. “Securitization and Desecuritization: Female Soldiers and the Reconstruction of Women in Post-Conflict Sierra Leone”, *Security Studies*, 18:2, 2009, pp. 241–261

Manasi, Ardra. “Gendering Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR): The Case of Female Ex-combatants”, *Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) Initiative*, 2017, <https://medium.com/@Ardra/gendering-disarmament-demobilization-and-reintegration-ddr-the-case-of-female-ex-combatants-fa9031a14338>

Marcaillou, Agnes. “The Gender Action Plan for the UN Department of Disarmament Affairs”, *Disarmament Forum*, no. 4, 2003, pp. 47–52

Marks, Zoe. “Gender, Social Networks, and Conflict Processes”, *Feminist@law*, vol 9, no. 1, 2019, pp. 1–33

Mazurana, Dylan E., McKay, Susan A., Carlson, Khristopher C., Kasper, Janel C. “Girls in Fighting Forces and Groups: Their Recruitment, Participation, Demobilization, and Reintegration”, *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace and Psychology*, 8(2), 2002, pp. 97–123

McMullin, Jareme R. “Ex-Combatants and the post-conflict State: Challenges of Reintegration”, *Rethinking Political Violence*, 2013, pp. 1–347

McMullin, Jareme R. “Integration or separation? The stigmatisation of ex-combatants after war”, *British International Studies Association*, 39, October 2012, pp. 385–414

McMullin, Jareme. “Reintegration of Combatants: Were the Right Lessons Learned in Mozambique?”, *International Peacekeeping*, vol. 11, no. 4, 2004, pp. 625–643

Ministry for Foreign Affairs Sweden. “Stockholm Initiative on Disarmament Demobilization Reintegration”, *Final Report*, 2006, pp. 1-48

Muggah, Robert. “Next Generation Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration”, *World Politics Review*, June 2014, <https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/13862/next-generation-disarmament-demobilization-and-reintegration>

Muggah, Robert. “No Magic Bullet: A Critical Perspective on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) and Weapons Reduction in Post-Conflict Contexts”, *The Round Table*, vol. 94, no. 379, April 2005, pp. 239–252

Muggah, Robert., O’Donnel, Chris. “Next Generation Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration”, *International Journal of Security and Development*, 4(1): 30, 2015, pp. 1–12, <https://www.stabilityjournal.org/articles/10.5334/sta.fs/>

Ollek, Maya Oza. “Forgotten females: Women and girls in post-conflict disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programs”, *Department of Political Science*, McGill University, Montreal, August 2007, pp. 1–135

Rutherford, Lauren. “Women, Peace and Security: Examining the Impact of Resolution 1325 on UN Disarmament and Demobilization Programs”, *Queen’s Policy Review*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 1–28

Schuberth, Moritz. “Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration in unconventional settings: the case of MINUSTAH’s community violence reduction”, *International Peacekeeping*, 24:3, 2017, pp. 410–433

Speake, Beth. “A Gender Approach to Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution”, *University of Leeds*, 2013, pp. 1–18 <https://www.e-ir.info/2013/02/11/a-gendered-approach-to-peacebuilding-and-conflict-resolution/>

Social Development Department. “Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration”, *Conflict, Crime and Violence*, no. 119, February 2009, pp. 1–11

Unicef. Cape Town Principles and Best Practices Adopted at the Symposium on the Prevention of recruitment of Children into the Armed Forces and on Demobilization and Social Reintegration of Child Soldiers in Africa, 1997, pp. 1–8, [https://www.unicef.org/emerg/files/Cape_Town_Principles\(1\).pdf](https://www.unicef.org/emerg/files/Cape_Town_Principles(1).pdf)

United Nations Instraw. “Virtual Discussion on Gender and Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration”, pp. 1–3

United Nations. “DDR and Peacebuilding: Thematic Review of DDR Contributions to Peacebuilding and the Role of the Peacebuilding Fund”, 2012, pp. 2–70

United Nations. “Operational Guide to the Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards”, 2014, pp. 1–317,
<http://unddr.org/uploads/documents/Operational%20Guide.pdf>

United Nations. “Second Generation Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) Practices in Peace Operations: A Contribution to the New Horizon Discussion on Challenges and Opportunities for UN Peacekeeping”, 2010, pp. 1–74

United Nations. “The United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women Platform for Action”, Women and Armed Conflict United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women, Department of Economic and Social Affairs,
<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/armed.htm>

United Nations Women. “Equipping women to become stronger mediators for peace in Africa”, 2015, <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2015/6/women-mediators-in-africa>

United Nations Women. “Facts and figures: Peace and security”,
<http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/peace-and-security/facts-and-figures>

World Bank Group, United Nations Peacekeeping, Social Science Research Council. “The Changing Landscape of Armed Groups: Doing DDR in new Contexts”, *Panel Discussion*, 2018, pp. 1–14

World Health Organization. Gender, Women, and the Tobacco Epidemic: 10. How to Make Policies More Gender-Sensitive, *Policies and Strategies*, pp. 191- 205,
https://www.who.int/tobacco/publications/gender/en_tfi_gender_women_how_make_policies_more_gender_sensitive.pdf

Zena, Prosper Nzekani. “The Lessons and Limits of DDR in Africa”, *Africa Security Brief*, Africa Center for Strategic Studies, no. 24 January 2013, pp. 1–8

Zuckerman, Elaine, Greenberg, Marcia. “The gender dimensions of post-conflict reconstruction: an analytical framework for policymakers”, *Gender and Development*, Vol. 12, no. 3, 2004, pp. 70–82